

HUDSON BAY RAILWAY

The most important question before the people of the West to-day is, "Shall the Hudson Bay Railway be completed forthwith?" An answer in the negative means the abandonment of the road for an indefinite period and the probable further consequence that it would eventually be dismantled. The whole question, however, of completing and putting into operation this important project is not so simple as might appear on its face. There must not only be taken into consideration the question of the feasibility and practicability of the route which, it was thought, had been settled definitely and favorably years ago and which is now opened up again, and the further question as to the actual material benefit that will result to the residents of the western plains and to Canada as a whole by the opening up of this route for traffic, but also several other matters affecting the issue must be carefully considered before the final decision is arrived at. Some of these are as follows:

The railway is already four-fifths completed and fourteen million dollars has been spent thereon, also six million dollars on the terminals.

The original reasons for constructing the road, viz., that it would be a quicker, cheaper and better route for exports from and imports to Western Canada, are certainly not less important and pronounced to-day than they were when the road was first undertaken. Subsequent developments have brought to light the fact that there are resources in the territory through which the work passes previously not known nor dreamed of, and development of these resources, and even connection with the bay itself, with its possibilities for northern trade, might be matters of the greatest importance to the people of this country.

While as a rule financial conditions in recent years have not justified embarking on any new enterprise of a national character, this particular undertaking is not a new one, but was nearing completion when the work was stopped, and besides other works of the nature mentioned have been commenced within the period stated. Again, the Hudson Bay Railway is an exception in another respect, in that provision has been made for a special fund to cover cost of construction.

This railway has been specifically and solemnly promised by successive governments and political parties in Canada for half a century. Do these promises and pledges have any significance? Should the people place any reliance on the word of those whom they have placed in positions of highest importance?

Only very few people have any doubt that the road will eventually be completed and put into operation, so, "if eventually, why not now?" Why wait until the work already done has so materially deteriorated that the money already expended is practically lost?

The situation in regard to farming in the West at the present time is such that something must be done to lessen the transportation

charges paid by the farmer not only on each item of his production but on the goods he uses and consumes.

All these then and other points must be carefully taken into consideration before final judgment is pronounced.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

Although the project of a road to Hudson's Bay is of special interest to western people, it is not a sectional but a national enterprise. In many respects it bears to the prairie provinces a similar relation to that which the Intercolonial Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway bear to the maritime provinces and British Columbia respectively. The construction of these two railroads was a condition of the entry of the provinces interested into confederation. While the construction of the H.B.R. may not have been a specific proviso in the agreement resulting in Manitoba becoming a province, nevertheless it is recorded that the question was brought up at the preliminary negotiations, and those acting on behalf of the province contended that the residents of the West would expect the Dominion to construct a railway to the bay, this being the natural outlet for the products of the western plains. And that the matter was taken seriously by the Dominion government is indicated by the statement of Hon. Thos. Greenway in a debate on the subject in parliament in 1907. He said: "I remember having had the honor of sitting on a committee of this house more than thirty years ago, when we took a good deal of evidence upon the subject (H.B.R.)."

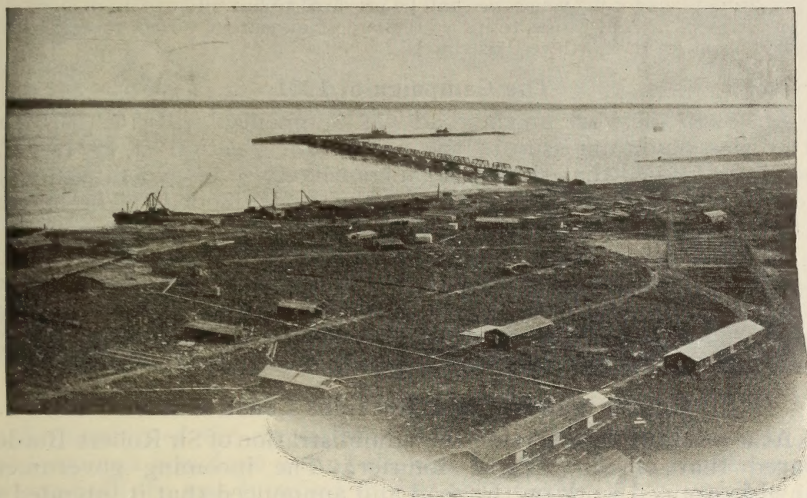
An Issue in Many Elections

During the half-century that this project has been before the public it has been an issue in many dominion and provincial elections; in some, the main issue, and in not a few, practically the only issue. The history of the railway politically and otherwise has such an important bearing on the question at issue that it is necessary to briefly review this.

All old-timers in the West will remember the notable by-election in Winnipeg in the year 1887. The sole issue in this election was the Hudson Bay Railway; not for or against, but as to which candidate and which party could best be relied upon to bring about its immediate construction. The contestants were Hugh Sutherland, an active promoter of the road, and W. B. Scarth, a supporter of the government of Sir John A. Macdonald, which government evidently endorsed the stand of its candidate, who was elected, thereby placing a distinct obligation on that government.

Prior to and during the historic election campaign of 1896, Sir Chas. Tupper, the prime minister, in parliament and elsewhere came out strongly in favor of building the Hudson Bay Railway. In the house in March of that year, in the course of a speech on that subject, he said: "I may say that, in my judgment, the rapid development and progress of Canada as a whole depends more upon the development of that great prairie region between the Red River and the Rocky Mountains than upon any other scheme that can be devised." And he quoted from remarks previously made by himself as follows: "Elaborate authorities have been quoted here by honorable gentlemen opposite to show that the navigation of the Hudson's Bay is impracticable. Sir, there is no person in this house, there is no intelligent man in this

country, who does not recognize the vast importance to Canada of this outlet for that great prairie region." He quoted from the report of Admiral Markham that the strait is readily navigable between four and five months in the year, and wound up by giving his own opinion as being favorable to the feasibility of the Hudson Bay route, and denounced those opposing it as lacking in faith in their country.



Terminal Works at Port Nelson

The election brought about a change of government, and during the succeeding years, by means of expeditions, committees of parliament and otherwise, there was made a very full and searching investigation into the merits of the route. Year after year debates on the subject took place and leaders of both sides vied with each other in expressing their confidence in the practicability of the route and the surpassing importance of the construction of the railway. The following are extracts from speeches made during this period by prominent men whose places of residence were widely separated and who were of different political views but of one mind in this particular respect.

Sir George Foster, in the House of Commons, 1907:

"With reference to the special question which has been brought up to-day, I believe the time has come when the Hudson Bay Railroad should be more than an academic question, just to be talked of sympathetically. I believe it ought to be built, and it cannot be built now any too soon."

M. C. McCarthy, M.P. (Calgary):

"I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that I am in favor of the government undertaking this work with the least possible delay. . . . The great reason which appeals to me in favor of this project is that it would save a haul of about 1,500 miles from the majority of the places from which grain is shipped in the prairie section, and that it would also relieve the congestion of freight at the time when it is most desirable we should have speedy shipment."

George W. Fowler, M.P. (New Brunswick):

"The question of the Hudson Bay Railway is a very important question to the people of the West. I do not believe that a more feasible route for a new transportation line can be found than by way of Hudson Bay. For my part, though coming from the extreme east, I am strongly in favor of the construction of this road."

Sir Wilfrid Laurier at Niagara Falls, Sept. 18th, 1908:

"We have undertaken the construction of another railway," said Sir Wilfrid, "the Hudson's Bay Railway. The Hudson's Bay Railway, I am sure, does not appeal very much to the people of Welland County. It concerns more the people of the West. But I say to you, gentlemen of Ontario, and you will agree with me, that what concerns one portion of the community concerns every part of the community. . . . We have come to the conclusion that the time to build this railway is now; not to-morrow, but now; and we have surveyors in the field looking at the condition of the country and preparing plans for us, which we shall be prepared to put into execution as soon as we receive them . . . so as to insure the largest measure of benefit possible to the Canadian people in the northwest provinces."

The Campaign of 1911

Although the work on the road was commenced in 1910, the whole matter was made an issue in the memorable election of 1911. The opposition claimed that the work was not likely to be expedited by the government to the extent that circumstances demanded. The Halifax platform of Sir Robert Borden included a clause calling for construction of the railway, and in his tour of the West Sir Robert specifically and definitely announced at various points that "the Conservative party has been committed to the construction of the Hudson's Bay Railway since 1896. The road will be built by the next Conservative administration without one day's unnecessary delay."

Borden Government Resumes Construction

As a result of this election the administration of Sir Robert Borden replaced that of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The incoming government forthwith stopped work on the road and announced that it intended to make a further and more complete investigation regarding the route and terminals. Hon. Frank Cochrane, the new minister of railways, personally looked over the ground and inspected the proposed terminals. On his return he spoke enthusiastically of the project. He said: "I have every faith in the scheme, and I will push the Hudson Bay Road for all it is worth. We intend to make this a good road. We have four-tenths grade. We are using eighty pound rails. I believe that the Hudson Bay route will mean much to the West in the way of lower freight rates. It will be a leveller, east and west. Just consider how much cheaper iron, steel and coal, for instance, from Sydney, could be shipped to the prairies. It will be of the greatest advantage to the East, and I believe eastern opposition is dying out. We found the bay free from ice. In fact, the only ice we saw to amount to anything was the bergs near Belle Isle, where all the Atlantic steamers encounter them. The straits are very wide, and with the aid of wireless I believe can be kept open for a long period." Surely a comprehensive and optimistic statement. It was subsequently announced that the railway would be finished in time to take out the 1915 crop. The fulfilment of this promise is now about eight years overdue.

Discontinuance

The statement is frequently made, not only in the East but also to some extent in the West, by those who should know better, that work on the railway was discontinued at the outbreak of the war or in the early years of the war. This is not only incorrect but on the contrary the work was speeded up and accelerated during the first years of the war, and was not finally discontinued, according to statement made by the Minister in parliament, until 1918, about the time



Gas Cars on Hudson Bay Railway

of the signing of the armistice. Most of the work on the road and terminals was done during the war period, and the greater part of the expenditure was incurred during that time. It is possible that the government had in mind at one time the possibility of the transportation of troops by this route. And here it might be pointed out that many, particularly those directly in touch with military affairs, contend, as an important reason for the completion of the road, that it may be invaluable in the event of Britain or Canada again being engaged in war.

Reasons for Stopping Work in 1918

Now, why was the work stopped? Considering circumstances as before mentioned, no satisfactory answer has been given to this question. The alleged reasons on examination narrow down to two.

1. *Lack of men*—It is however rather peculiar that within a few months after discontinuing the work on the Hudson Bay Railway contracts were let for resumption of work on the Welland Canal which had been closed down completely several years before. The reason given for this renewed activity was the importance, if not the absolute necessity, of providing work for the unemployed, which were then becoming increasingly numerous. Other public works were started again, ostensibly for the same reason. To the Hudson Bay Railway alone, of all national undertakings, this had apparently no application.

2. *Lack of money*—The statement so frequently made was that the financial condition of the country did not warrant any further expenditure on the H.B.R. Other public works of national importance did not seem to suffer from the somewhat sudden and not too apparent conversion to the principle of economy. Again take the case of the Welland Canal. The work had been closed down and plant disposed of years before. No reason for resuming this work could be given but what would apply with added force to the H.B.R. Besides

there were strong reasons why work on the canal should be deferred, especially in view of the financial conditions then existing. In an article in the *Grain Growers' Guide* recently, the writer, although favourable to the canal scheme, has set out the situation in this respect very succinctly:

"It is somewhat of an anomaly that the big St. Lawrence project is still in the discussion stage, while the Welland ship canal is almost finished. Canada is going about the waterways problem backwards."

And the work will cost over one hundred million dollars, of which one-half has been spent. The other fifty millions plus for this cart-before-the-horse project can, it would seem, readily be obtained, but not a fraction of that amount for the H.B.R.

Again the same people who cry economy when the northern railway is mentioned are strongly advocating the St. Lawrence canal scheme involving an expenditure of anything from five hundred to a thousand million dollars and perhaps more. Western Canada is not averse to this undertaking; it simply reserves judgment. In the meantime, finish what is on hand.

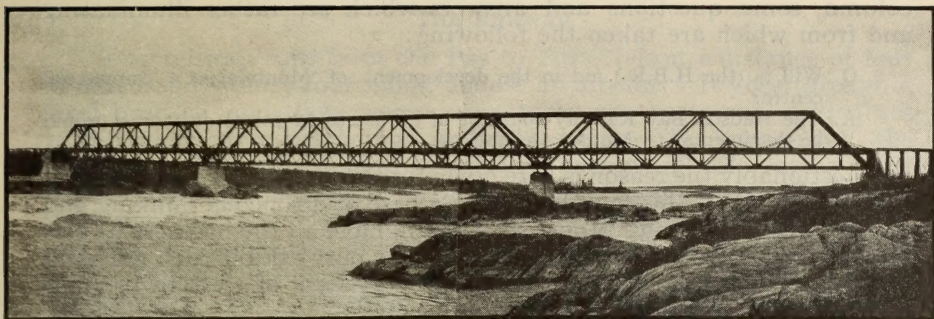
Vast sums are yearly being poured into the old Trent Canal, and this for "construction" purposes. Eastern harbour works get regular handouts, and the construction of an expensive new dry-dock at Victoria has been commenced and is being continued; this since a certain bye-election in that place in 1919. Further comment in this respect is surely unnecessary.

The Branch Lines Argument

What was meant to be a particularly clever and subtle stroke has been provided by certain ministers of the crown in their statement that if additional money is expended on the Hudson Bay Railway the provision cannot be made for the construction of branch lines in the West so necessary to the success of the settlers in many districts. There is no question about the pressing need for certain of these lines, but why make the Hudson Bay Railway the alternative? Why not the completion of the parliament buildings, or the Welland Canal, or some other national undertaking? Why, as a matter of fact, should there be any condition or alternative of this nature? Should not these separate enterprises each stand on its own feet? And, anyway, the implied threat could not and would not be carried out. In fact, the situation would likely develop quite otherwise. The completion and operation of the Hudson Bay Railway is more likely to bring about additional branch line construction.

Special Fund Provided

Not only in the ordinary sense is there no ground for discriminating against the H.B.R., but this enterprise is in an exceptionally favourable position in respect of funds, for which provision has been specifically and definitely made. An amendment to the Dominion Land Act, 1884, provided for a land grant of sixty-four hundred acres for that part of the line in Manitoba and twelve thousand eight hundred acres for the part in N.W.T., such grant to be given to any person or company who would build the road. In 1908, when it had been practically decided to make this a government enterprise, the act was further amended by replacing the aforementioned provision by one providing for the setting aside of a large area of land in Saskatchewan and Alberta to be disposed



Bridge over Nelson River at Kettle Rapids, present end of steel

of as pre-emptions and purchased homesteads, the proceeds realized therefrom to be earmarked as a fund for the construction of this railway.

The Hon. Frank Oliver in introducing this amendment said:

"While we have the provision in regard to a land grant in aid of a railway to Hudson Bay facing us on the statute book, we also have the fact that the need of a railway to Hudson Bay is more strongly impressed on the people to-day than ever before by reason of the settlement of the two western provinces, because the further west settlement proceeds, the greater the advantage of an outlet to the Bay will be. . . . What I had in view was to place before the parliament a proposition that should put beyond question the fact that we had adequately provided assistance from an entirely new source of revenue to enable the Hudson Bay Railway to be built. . . . The position, as I bring it before the house and country, is that beyond all question we are offering an adequate means of meeting the liability that will be created out of an entirely new source of revenue, to the full satisfaction of the people immediately interested and, I believe, of the people of the country as well."

Sir Robert Borden, speaking on the bill, emphasized the fact that whether sufficient money for the purpose was realized in this way or not "the Hudson Bay Railway project stands by itself, endorsed and approved by this House" and must be completed. Recently a statement was furnished by the department of the interior showing that lands from this area to the extent of over eight million acres had been sold and more than eighteen million dollars has been already collected, the balance still remaining outstanding in the way of deferred payments. The question then naturally arises what does the government propose to do with these funds if they are not used for the purpose to which they were devoted?

Opposition to H.B.R. Develops

A short time after construction of the road was well under way criticism of the scheme practically ceased. But after the work had been discontinued for a couple of years or so those opposed, particularly eastern publications, seeing an opportunity not only to prevent resumption of the work but to have the railway dismantled and the scheme finally abandoned, commenced an active campaign of criticism and abuse; and propaganda was extended far and wide. What these critics lack in argument they make up in denunciation and violent language. The road is referred to as "folly run mad," "senseless undertaking," "mad enterprise," etc., and its advocates as "bigoted fanatics." While the *Montreal Gazette* was fulminating against the scheme, there appeared in the *Montreal Star*, tucked away in its correspondence

column, some questions and answers which are rather illuminating and from which are taken the following:

- Q. Will it (the H.B.R.) aid in the development of Montreal as a commercial centre?
- A. The Hudson Bay Railway could be of no use to Montreal; in fact, it would be detrimental to Montreal's interests.

Unquestionably the reason is here given for the attitude of the Montreal "interests." But this may be simply a case of erroneous thinking and results will prove that Montreal will still have all the business its terminal can handle. Why then should that port exhibit such grasping proclivities and take the attitude that every item of western produce must pay a toll there.

Take a specific example of the kind of material that is put out for eastern consumption. Mr. J. Lambert Payne, in the course of an article also in the *Gazette* and bristling with inaccurate statements, writes:

"It has been assumed that the ordinary ship of commerce could go in and out of Hudson Bay during four, and possibly five, months in the year, beginning at the end of June and ending with October. . . . It was discovered, however, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the ordinary ship of commerce could not navigate the straits at any period of the year, be that period short or long."

Although anticipating discussion of the navigability of the straits, let us take the evidence of Mr. W. A. Bowden, chief engineer, department of railways and canals, which effectively disposes of the above. Speaking before the Dominion royal commission in Ottawa, he stated that during the last three seasons (1914-15-16) "we have not met with a single accident, although in one of the seasons thirty-eight passages through Hudson Straits were made," and in his evidence before the Senate committee he referred to the steamers used as "tramp steamers" and "unprotected," and that purposely he did not strengthen the ships purchased by the government as "it was desirable in the interest of the project as a whole that they should know that an ordinary vessel could do," and "these vessels made a number of voyages to the bay without any trouble, coming early and going late." It might be pointed out that no evidence whatever is given in support of the very extraordinary assertions of Mr. Payne, and this also may be said regarding the bulk of eastern criticism. However, the reiteration of these statements is having its effect. But what of the West? For some time it remained in a rather apathetic state, apparently under the delusion that things would work out all right in good time. The now famous "dismantling" order has furnished the necessary "jolt" and awakened the western people to the seriousness of the situation.

However, the issue has been raised again, and it is advisable to meet it, even if this involves going over the same ground that was covered years ago.

FEASIBILITY OF THE ROUTE

The question is as to the feasibility and navigability of the Hudson Bay route. In what respect is this route not feasible? or navigable? Are the "insuperable difficulties" to which reference has been made to be found in the railway, in the bay, or in the straits, or in all three of them? Let us look at each of these separate divisions of the route:

The Railway

The railway runs from the Pas to Port Nelson, a distance of four hundred and twenty-four miles, almost an air-line. It goes through a level country, and there would seem to be no exceptional difficulties with regard to construction or maintenance. A portion of the road, owing to the somewhat spongy nature of the upper soil, would require perhaps more than the ordinary amount of ballast, but there has been found only one sink-hole in the whole route, and that was effectively disposed of several years ago. The grade is completed to the bay and eighty-pound steel has been laid a distance of three hundred and thirty-two miles, leaving only ninety miles to complete. Three steel bridges have been erected, one over the Saskatchewan and two over the Nelson, at a total cost of one million dollars. There is, as Hon. Mr. Cochrane stated, a four-tenths grade and movement of traffic should be pretty easy. Any advantage there may be is in favor of outgoing traffic. The sidings are long and at frequent intervals, the supposition evidently having been that a double track would be necessary in the not too remote future. The railway approximately parallels the Nelson River and only a short distance therefrom for about two-thirds of its length, and in this course the river contains many important water-powers. At one place, about thirty miles from the railway, four hundred thousand h.p. can be developed at a minimum expense. There are therefore important and far-reaching possibilities in the way of electrification.

2. Hudson Bay

This is a vast inland sea; a body of salt water eight hundred miles long by five hundred miles wide. It does not freeze over. The water is deep, and there are no obstructing rocks or islands and practically no icebergs to interfere with navigation. There are no special obstacles to be overcome by navigators, and all reports go to show that this immense body of water can be as readily and easily navigated as almost any other.

3. Hudson Straits

If there are any serious difficulties in respect to the navigation of this route these must be found in Hudson Straits. Are the straits navigable? It is passing strange that it was only within a comparatively recent period that any such doubt has been expressed. In the departmental publication, "The Hudson Bay Road," Mr. McKenna makes some very pertinent remarks:

"In the course of a century and three-quarters seven hundred and fifty vessels, ranging from seventy-gun ships to ten-ton pinnaces, crossed the ocean, passed through the straits and sailed the bay in the service of the company. And only two were lost. A marvellous record, when it is remembered that all the craft were sailers, most of them small and of rude construction, and that the bay and strait afforded none of the modern accessories to navigation in the way of coast aids."

The straits are 450 miles long and from forty to a hundred miles wide. The water is exceedingly deep and there are no shoals or rocks to impede navigation. Mr. A. P. Low, who commanded the "Neptune" expedition says:

"There is no natural difficulty in the navigation of the bay and strait so far as the depth of water, presence of obstructions and width of channel are concerned."

What difficulties there are then are in the nature of floating ice. This comes down from Fox Channel at certain seasons of the year, but is pretty well broken up by the time it reaches the straits. To some extent icebergs and other forms of ice enter the eastern end from Davis Strait, but any ice of this nature does not go through the straits hardly more than half way, and only a very small portion of the ice from this source enters the straits; most of it continues on into the Atlantic, where it is found off Newfoundland and sometimes in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Wireless Would Facilitate Navigation

It is authoritatively stated that owing to existing currents there is an open channel in the straits at all times and, with ordinary aids to navigation, including wireless equipment, information could be given as to the location of this channel and thus delays would be avoided. As an instance of what can be accomplished in this respect, an official for several years located at Port Nelson has reported that when he first went in he was on one of the government steamers to which reference has already been made, another of these steamers was a day or so in advance and several others were coming along a couple of days or so behind. While going through the straits, the commander of the leading ship sent a wireless message to the others regarding a large ice floe and advised in what respect it would be necessary to change their course in order to avoid this. The commander of the second steamer, however, decided to go straight ahead and see what was the situation. The result was his ship was delayed by the ice, although no damage resulted. The ships following changed their course slightly, avoided the ice and arrived at Nelson before the second boat. As to the advantage, therefore, of wireless communication in navigation of the straits, no further comment would appear to be necessary.

Aids to Navigation

A noteworthy feature of the controversy is that adverse critics appear entirely to overlook the fact that on the Hudson Bay route are to be found none of the ordinary aids to navigation that are regarded as necessary and which are provided in other commercial routes. It is hardly in order then to compare this northern route in its natural state with other commercial routes on which so many millions have been spent to make them reasonably safe for navigation. Let there be placed at Hudson Straits a modern equipment designed to minimise the dangers of navigation and many fearsome and so-called insuperable difficulties will disappear entirely. Even in its natural state small sailing vessels have navigated these waters successfully for over two hundred years, and it is a well known fact that this class of vessel may be becalmed and held up for days in ice floes that would offer no difficulties to an ordinary steamship.

EXPERIENCE OF NAVIGATORS

Some of the government expeditions which have been sent out to determine beyond doubt the feasibility and navigability of this route are the following:

Commander A. R. Gordon, in 1884-5-6, in the "Neptune" and "Alert."

Commander William Wakeham, 1897, in the "Diana."

A. P. Low, in the "Neptune," in 1903 and 1904.

Dr. Bell, F.R.G.S., accompanied several government cruises and made many trips to the bay. From the mass of information available regarding the bay and straits, not only by way of reports from the aforementioned but from statements and reports of other navigators, explorers, scientific men and Hudson's Bay Company officials, the following statements are taken more or less at random. A careful examination of these should enable the unbiassed searcher after truth to form an opinion as to the conditions which actually exist:

Commander A. R. Gordon—

"The ice has been supposed hitherto to be the most formidable barrier to the navigation of the straits, but its terrors disappeared to a great extent under investigation. We met no icebergs in Hudson's Bay nor did we hear of any being seen there; in the straits a good many were seen. The icebergs seen in Hudson's Straits in August and September would form no great barrier to navigation, nor do those met with off the Straits of Belle Isle, nor were they more numerous in Hudson's Straits than they frequently are off Belle Isle."

Commander William Wakeman—

"Steam has now effected a complete revolution in ice navigation, and the most advantageous time for pushing on is when the ice is loose. Under similar circumstances a sailing ship would be utterly hopeless. . . . The nature and consistency of the ice in Hudson's Straits are such that, with an efficient steamer, the passage should be accomplished with very little delay or difficulty. . . . I absolutely agree with Captain Gordon in fixing the date for the opening of navigation in Hudson Strait for commercial purposes by suitable vessels at from July 1 to 10. I consider that navigation should close from October 15th to 20th."

Dr. Bell—

"It is impossible that there should be at any time in the twelve months difficulty in navigating the straits, for they are upon tide water. . . . Why, navigation through the straits should be particularly easy, because, while there may at times be floating ice, there are no rocks and no islands upon which to go ashore."

Captain William Kennedy, who accompanied an expedition in search of the remains of Sir John Franklin and who has had eight years' experience of the Straits, says they are navigable from June to November.

Captain William Hackland, in the Hudson's Bay Company's service for 39 years, reports:

"Straits never freeze; no reason why steamships should not navigate at any time."

J. W. Tyrrell, who has gone through the straits several times, writes:

"The straits can, in my opinion, be relied upon for unobstructed navigation from July 15th to November 1st, with a possible extension of two weeks at either end. . . . As to icebergs, they are occasionally met with in Hudson Straits, being sometimes carried in along the north shore by the prevailing current from Davis Strait, but they are by no means of frequent occurrence and not one-tenth as numerous as off the Straits of Belle Isle."

Captain Bernier:

"The Hudson Bay and Strait are open to navigation the year around, but as far as the Strait is concerned icebergs block the way in places according where the current into or out of the bay drives them. With wireless stations established so that ships could be directed in their course the Hudson Bay ports would rank amongst the most important on the continent, owing to the very appreciable difference in distance to Europe compared with that of other ports."

A select committee of the Manitoba legislature was appointed in 1884 to procure evidence and report upon the practicability of the Hudson Bay route. After taking evidence of a number of men with a thorough practical knowledge of the subject a report was made from which the following is taken:

"No evidence has been given that goes to prove that Hudson's Straits and Bay proper ever freeze over, or that the ice met with in those waters is sufficient to prevent navigation at any time of the year. That consequently the period of navigation is defined by the time during which the ports, harbours, or roadsteads on the shores of the bay can be entered by vessels of a suitable description for such navigation. From the evidence adduced it appears that such ports or harbours are open, on an average, from four and a half to five months in each year to ordinary vessels."

During the years following numerous other investigations of a similar nature have been made from time to time, culminating in that of a special committee of the Senate which reported in 1920. The first two clauses of that report are as follows:

"That the Hudson Bay route is feasible and will probably in time be profitable."

"That the season of navigation under present conditions is at least four months in length and may by reason of improvements in aids to navigation be considerably increased."

The question of the occurrence of fogs has frequently been brought up. Competent authorities state that fogs are not so prevalent in the straits and bay as farther south off the Labrador Coast and the Strait of Belle Isle and sometimes in the St. Lawrence Gulf; that in fact the northern waters are somewhat remote from the area where these fogs naturally develop.

Recently a writer of a newspaper letter, referring to the difficulty of navigating the straits, said that "this feature ought to be settled beyond peradventure of a doubt" and that "twenty-five years hence it could probably be definitely determined." In the light of evidence already submitted during a period of double that length of time, is it at all likely that the question could be more definitely settled in twenty-five years hence than it is now, unless the route in the meantime were actually put into operation for commercial purposes? But any such action is condemned by the writer. His attitude therefore is somewhat in line with the well-known injunction to refrain from entering the water until one has learned to swim.

THE OPEN SEASON

Altogether it may be definitely stated that the route, after being provided with accessories to navigation which owing to the progress of science may now be obtained, is open for commercial purposes from the beginning of July until well on in November. Reports are conflicting as to June, so that even a considerable portion of that month might be included. However, it may be said with reasonable assurance that the season will extend to about the same time as that at Montreal. Taking into consideration then the fact that grain from Western points will take upon an average one month to reach the St. Lawrence, whereas the haul to the bay will cover a period of not more than ten days, the northern route would therefore have the advantage at the end of the season of about three weeks.

This is a complete refutation of the assertion frequently made that the route in any event is not open at the proper season for the export of western products, particularly grain. As shown above, there would be a period of two or three months during which the crop might be shipped out in the same year that it is grown, and thus the northern route has in this respect an important advantage over that via the East.

There has been considerable speculation as to the effect of the opening of this new route on other established routes and interests. In a

recent issue of the *Winnipeg Tribune* appeared a special article on the routing of grain, from which the following is taken:

"How many people in the Dominion realize that one-half of every bushel of grain sent down the lakes from Fort William to the European consumer passes out of the hands of Canadian carriers after it leaves the terminal elevators at the head of the Canadian lakes? It may well be challenged as uneconomic, as a great national waste, but it is a fact, humiliating though it may be. No more practical argument can be employed in favour of additional and improved routes for Canadian grain to Europe. . . . So, if the Hudson Bay route was handling grain to-day or the Pacific Coast route, the chief industry to lose would be that in the hands of alien interests—the American lake fleet, the American elevators, the American railroads and the Atlantic ports of the United States."

Return Cargoes

Another question that is frequently asked is: "What about return cargoes?" As though that were a matter that affects exclusively the Hudson Bay route. The Vancouver-Panama route has this difficulty to contend with, the St. Lawrence route is by no means free from it, and the same trouble is to be found in connection with Great Lakes transportation and with our railways in certain seasons. When the products of the West go out via Hudson Bay, then the goods and supplies needed and used there will enter by the same route, including goods which cannot now be obtained on account of transportation costs. A tramp steamer takes a cargo out of Port Nelson to Liverpool. Being a "tramp," it will in all probability not return by the same route, but pick up a cargo for other ports and there possibly load again for Port Nelson, and this traffic would be in addition to the trade to and fro which would be taken care of by "liners." The carrying of goods by ships right into the heart of the West means lessened cost, therefore heavier consumption and thus greater traffic. Besides, as has already been intimated, the big advantage of this route is in the smaller number of trans-shipments that take place and the fewer items of profit that are added to the original cost.

COST OF THE ROAD

A great deal has been said and written about the expense involved in completing the route and terminals. The total cost of the railway to the thirty-first of March, 1919, was \$14,526,560. There was an item of one million dollars in the estimates in 1918 for the completion of the road and it was stated at the time that this amount would be sufficient for the purpose. This would have made the cost of the road, if then completed, fifteen and half a million dollars. However, owing to deterioration and damage from disuse and neglect, the cost of completing the road will now be somewhat greater than would have been the case in 1918. The Minister stated in parliament in March, 1920, that

"The estimated cost of completing the tracklaying into Port Nelson is \$1,750,000, but to complete the railway will require \$4,000,000."

Costs were higher then than now and this last mentioned amount should not now be exceeded.

Major G. A. Bell, deputy minister of railways, in his evidence before the senate committee, stated:

"The original estimates of the work (\$25,000,000) would not have been exceeded, but owing to the closing down of the work it will increase the cost. That estimate comprises the dredging to deep water. The \$25,000,000 covers the railway and all, including one storage elevator."

He subsequently informed the committee that the elevator referred to would be one of one and a half million bushels capacity.

A bushel of wheat will not take up any more space at Port Nelson than at any other terminal. Terminal elevators will have to be provided in any event. The eastern and western ports are now loudly calling for the erection of additional storage facilities. Some of these will be needed, irrespective of whether the Hudson Bay Railway is completed or not, to take care of the grain naturally tributary to the ports in question. The elevator capacity necessary to handle the grain which would naturally go out by Port Nelson should of course be erected at that point. The cost in the latter case should not average any more than in the other instances. It should be quite clear, though, that whatever amount the railway and terminals will cost over and above the original estimate is the price that will have to be paid for the discontinuance of the work.

Miss Agnes Laut, than whom perhaps no one is more familiar with the history of Western and Northern Canada and with the existing conditions herein and who has written several books dealing therewith, says in one of these:

"If the Hudson's Bay route is not fit for navigation, the country must make it fit for navigation. Of telegraphs, shelters, lighthouses, there is not now one. If Peter the Great had waited until St. Petersburg was a fit site for a city, there would have been no St. Petersburg. He made it fit. The same problem confronts Northwest America to-day. It is absurd that a population of millions has no seaport nearer than 2,000 miles. Churchill or York would be seaports in the middle of the continent. Of course there would be wrecks and difficulties. The wrecks are part of the toll we pay for harnessing the sea. The difficulties are what make nations great. One day was the delay allowed the fur ships for the straits. Who has not waited longer than one day to enter New York harbour or Montreal?"

HUDSON BAY TERMINALS

What about the terminals? Has not a serious mistake been made in the selection of Port Nelson instead of Fort Churchill? In connection with the discussion of the Hudson Bay route no questions are more frequently asked than these, and possibly none are harder to answer. Although on this point statements, especially of laymen as distinguished from engineers, are particularly dogmatic, however, many if not the majority of opinions so emphatically stated appear to be based on lack of knowledge and misconception of the exact conditions. As a case in point, take this from a recent issue of the *Kitchener News Record*: "Churchill on Hudson Bay was originally selected as the terminus of the railway. Real estate and other interests had the location switched to Nelson." There is nothing on record to show that Churchill ever had been selected. Besides, the fact is that the whole area at Port Nelson is a government reserve. There is no private ownership of land there. The *Record*, in this as in other statements in the same article, speaks "utterly regardless." Without having investigated the matter thoroughly, a layman would probably say that Churchill should have been selected, and, whether or not he would take the same attitude after investigation, he would then see that the argument is not by any means all on one side. Let us then look at the facts, and from these we can draw our own conclusions.

Churchill Harbor

Churchill is a harbor naturally protected by its walls of grey quartzite, which close in at the mouth leaving an opening about two

thousand feet wide. The harbor is the mouth of the Churchill River which there forms a wide lagoon or basin. The water at the entrance is about one hundred feet deep, and just within is an area more than a mile long and from one-third to half-a-mile wide having a minimum depth of thirty-four feet. Adjoining this and extending for another mile or so upstream is another area with a minimum depth of twenty feet to twenty-five feet. This latter comes close to the east shoreline and along here a mile or a mile and a half of docks could readily be built. The dredging might be rather difficult, but the disposal of the material in the bay would be quite easy. It is said that the deep-water



Churchill Harbor

area first mentioned is only sufficient to allow three ocean-going vessels to swing anchored at the bow only. But why should even this number of vessels swing at anchor in that harbor when dockage facilities are provided. Further up-stream the basin widens and the water becomes perceptibly shallower.

There are then excellent facilities for a certain amount of shipping. Should these not be sufficient for the business which would develop it would be necessary to extend the deep-water portion of the harbor. This would involve dredging, and it is in this connection that the engineers' reports differ very materially. All agree that dredging can be done, but are not in accord as to the difficulty and expense involved. The main trouble seems to be in connection with boulders of considerable size. These appear both on shore and in the shallow water. To what extent they exist in the deeper water is not known. The bottom of the basin, at any rate in the upper part thereof, is hardpan, which material is harder to handle than clay, sand or gravel, but on the other hand when the work is accomplished it is of a much more permanent nature. In making a port at Churchill the difficulties from an engineering point of view would have been much more easily overcome than those at Nelson.

Nelson Harbor

The mouth of the Nelson on the other hand is a "v"-shaped estuary. It is a roadstead rather than a harbor. Port Nelson is situated at the upper end of this estuary twenty miles from the deep water of the bay. Coming in from the bay a ship would enter a channel which was located and mapped out in 1918. This first crosses what is known



Bridge to "Island" at Port Nelson

as "the bar." It is from twelve hundred to three thousand feet in width and will allow for the passage at low water of boats drawing twenty feet. In this channel, between miles eight and thirteen from the port, is what is known as "the deep hole," where the water is of sufficient depth at all times to accommodate the largest steamers and extensive enough to give anchorage for any number of ships which might be engaged in traffic with the port. This anchorage, however, is not by any means ideal.

Harbor Works at Nelson

The harbor works at Nelson consist of a 17-span bridge running out from the shore a distance of 3500 feet to the edge of the channel. From the end of the bridge, running up-stream along this channel and approximately parallel to the shore, there will be erected an "island" which at first will be half a mile long by five hundred feet wide, the intention being to eventually extend this to nine thousand feet and connect with the shore at the upper end, thereby allowing continuous passage of trains. The "island," which will furnish wharfage and terminal facilities, will be built of timber cribwork. It will be filled in with material taken from the channel by dredging. There will be thirty feet of water here at low tide, fifty feet at high tide. The deep-water wharves thereby provided will be founded on the edge of the old natural channel, which is composed of hardpan; thus there will be thirty feet of water at all times where ships will load and unload, and a channel out to sea of twenty feet. This will mean that Nelson will be a tidal harbor for ships of greater draught than twenty feet, but it may be pointed out that some of the greatest harbors in the world are tidal harbors. It is asserted that ships can ride at anchor in the deep hole or remain tied to the docks without suffering damage even in the greatest storms owing to the distance which these locations are from the deep water of the bay; that the force of any storm which might arise will be very materially broken before it reaches the places mentioned.

Now, while as previously stated it would have been much easier from an engineering standpoint to construct the necessary harbor works at Churchill than at Nelson, still it is claimed that these engineering difficulties have now been overcome and that the terminal facilities

which it is proposed to erect at Nelson will be quite adequate and satisfactory for the extensive traffic which it is anticipated will develop. The claim is made also that, the walls of the channel being of hardpan and the current of the river rapid at this point, that the dredging which will be done will be of a permanent nature and very little of this work will be required from year to year. Authorities differ in respect to the difficulty and cost of dredging at this port as compared with Churchill; but it may be generally conceded that, although there is considerable similarity, the work at Nelson will not be so difficult or costly per yard or unit as that at Churchill. But in the former case the work will have to be done on a very much more extensive scale and has to be done as a necessary preliminary to any shipping operations, whereas at Churchill the dredging immediately required would not be very extensive, and how much would be ultimately necessary would depend on the amount of shipping which would then require to use that harbor.

However, in view of the fact that there has been so much difference of opinion even amongst experts with regard to these two terminal ports and on account of the feeling that appears to have developed very generally, rightly or otherwise, that a wrong selection has been made, it is therefore very important and strongly advisable, as recommended by the senate committee, that without delay the whole matter be thoroughly investigated by a board or committee consisting of men of unquestioned standing in matters of this kind, and on report being submitted the final selection shall be made.

The selection, however, of the best location for a port is simply a detail in the general scheme. It is admitted that this is an exceedingly important detail and will play no small part in the general success of the enterprise, which, however, should not be held up indefinitely simply because there is a difference of opinion on this point. The *Toronto Star*, in a recent reference to the undertaking as a whole, said: "Isn't it too splendid a possibility to be left untried or abandoned when so nearly completed. If Nelson is the wrong terminal, why not shift to Churchill?" Let the railway then be proceeded with, and while this is being done the investigation mentioned should take place and this exceedingly important detail disposed of as other details of the scheme, also important, will have to be investigated and decided upon from time to time.

It is not inconceivable, however, that both terminals shall eventually be required. If, after the investigation mentioned, the present selection is confirmed, then the question of using Churchill will be one for consideration at some later date. The time will depend on trade developments. If, however, it is found advisable to change the terminal location at the present time, it might be in order, owing to the work that has already been done at Nelson, to continue the connection with that point with a view to the development of trade with the north and particularly to the exploitation of the fisheries of the bay.

RESOURCES OF THE BAY AND DISTRICT

A glance at the map of Canada shows clearly that Hudson Bay would appear to be strategically, perhaps rather providentially, located for the purpose of providing a short and easy outlet for the products of the western plains. The bay bears a similar relation to this country as a whole to that which the Mediterranean occupies in the east. It

might, however, be more fittingly compared to that other Old World sea, the Baltic. They are approximately the same length, but the bay has an area of about 500,000 square miles, three times that of the Baltic. The latter extends to a slightly higher latitude, but has the advantage of a southern entrance. Three great countries are mainly dependent on the Baltic for their sea-borne commerce, although navigation there is seriously interrupted from November 15th to May 1st. The Gulf of Finland is closed one hundred and fifty days each year, and "sudden and frequent changes of the wind, accompanied by violent storms, render this sea dangerous for navigation." Stockholm and Petrograd are further north than Fort Churchill, and there would appear to be no physical reason why the work accomplished by Peter the Great on the shores of the Baltic should not be duplicated on Hudson Bay.

An interesting comparison also is that between the bay and Port Nelson on the one hand with the White Sea and Archangel on the other. The White Sea has a northern outlet directly to the Arctic Ocean. This is seven degrees north of Hudson Strait, and Archangel, situate at the southern extremity of this northern sea, is four degrees north of the entrance to Hudson Bay and eight degrees north of Port Nelson. Archangel was founded in 1584, and was the chief seaport of Russia until the founding of St. Petersburg in 1703. The harbor of Archangel, which according to Nelson's Encyclopedia "has been deepened from twelve feet to twenty-two feet, is an excellent one and, though ice-bound from October to May, is visited annually by more than eight hundred vessels." This port played an exceedingly important part in the war, and at that time "rivalled the great commercial cities of the world in the number and tonnage of ships arriving and departing."

HUDSON BAY FIRST GATEWAY TO WEST

Only about a century ago Hudson Bay was looked upon as the only gateway to the west and north. The Hudson's Bay Company had then practically all their posts on its shores, and even for many years afterwards outlying posts which were subsequently established were tributary to those on the bay. In the meantime the great plains of the west were penetrated by traders from the east and trading headquarters gradually shifted from York Factory to Montreal. Thus it came about that later generations had very little knowledge of the great bay of the north and its resources.

The pendulum is now swinging back. The expansive prairies of the west that were first viewed by the lone pathfinder from the bay became peopled and prosperous. As production increased and the inadequacies of transportation facilities came to be a serious handicap, attention was again turned towards the original gateway of the north as a means of relief, providing an additional outlet. Through this gateway came the original Red River settlers, and it is not too much to expect that the products of the descendants of these pioneers shall find their way to the markets of the world by the same route.

Practically all the present western farm area except the Peace River District is situated in the basins of the Saskatchewan and Red rivers which form part of the great Nelson river basin draining into Hudson Bay. Now let us look at some other great wheat producing countries: the middle western States, Egypt, Russia, China, Argentine. The grain and other products of these are transported to the seaboard

along natural routes, the courses of the great rivers draining the territories in question. Canada, however, has ignored this natural way of transportation, and western products are carried across the natural divisions at great additional expense to outlets most remote from the scene of production. Western Canada's present serious handicap is not in ocean mileage but in extent of rail haul to reach seaboard.

THE SAVING IN RAIL HAUL

Montreal and Port Nelson are practically the same distance from Liverpool, approximately 3000 miles. From Port Arthur to Montreal is in round figures 1000 miles. If a line is drawn from Weyburn to Dauphin, any points in the vicinity of this line are practically the same distance from Port Nelson as from Port Arthur, and therefore in respect to these points the northern route has the advantage of one thousand miles. For territory east of this line it is proportionately less, but for that to the west the distance gained is considerably more. In round figures the saving in mileage by the bay route in respect to certain points is as follows: Regina, 1050 miles; Calgary, 1150 miles; Saskatoon, 1175 miles; Prince Albert, 1300 miles; Melfort, 1300 miles; Edmonton, 1100 miles. When it is taken into consideration also that this saving in transportation is mainly in respect to rail haul, it can readily be seen what benefit and advantage will accrue to western farmers by shipping over the shorter route. Additional considerations, such as congestion which frequently occurs in the eastern route and which became very acute last fall, and the exorbitant freight rates which were imposed by eastern shipping interests, accentuate that advantage.

BRITISH VIEWS OF THE ROUTE

It is interesting to note the attitude of the Old Land toward this project. In the issue of November, 1917, of *Kelly's Monthly Trade Review*, a standard and reliable monthly commercial publication of London, England, there appeared as the leading article one entitled "Our Backbone—a Government Wheat-Transport Line—The Port Nelson-Liverpool Route." The title in itself is very significant. In this the statement is made that "Canada alone, the greatest of our wheat-producing dominions, can easily by development supply every bushel of the great margin of grain now imported as food to the British Isles." The writer points out that "Canada's prairies are the nearest and most prolific wheat producing areas of the Empire," and that "the completion of the state railway from The Pas to Port Nelson on Hudson Bay and the establishment of a line of grain carrying and other ships by the Hudson Strait route is the beginning therefore of a movement of enormous importance both to Canada and to the United Kingdom."

A detailed statement is given showing the distance in land and sea miles, or rather water miles, for the great lakes are included under that head, between Saskatoon and Liverpool via Montreal and Port Nelson respectively, which statement shows an advantage in favor of Port Nelson route of 792 land miles and 393 sea miles, in all 1185 miles. The important item of course is the saving in land miles, for the rail haulage according to statement recently made costs seven times as much

as the water haulage. A further point in this connection is that by the Montreal route grain is handled four different times, whereas by the northern route only two handlings are necessary. It is the number of trans-shipments of exports, and more particularly perhaps of imports, which adds so much to the cost which the western settler has to pay, for not only is he accountable for direct charges in connection with these but, in the case of imports, there is generally an item of profit added on each occasion.

The article in question concludes with the following: "In the prospective Port Nelson-Liverpool route we see the pioneer in the development of the era of greater Canadian wheat supplies and a government wheat and food transport line. Its completion will be awaited with an interest commensurate with its high importance to the Dominion of Canada, to the United Kingdom and to our Allies."

CATTLE SHIPMENTS

An exceedingly important advantage which the Hudson Bay route has over all other routes, and which has hitherto not been specifically mentioned, is in connection with the shipment of cattle. In a debate in the house of commons in 1908, Mr. J. Herron, M.P. (Alberta), said:

"I would like, however, to say that one phase of the Hudson Bay route which specially commends it to the favor of the people of Southern Alberta lies in the advantage that it will offer in connection with the shipment of cattle from the range country. Our wild stock raised on the prairies do not take kindly to transportation by rail. It is the long railway journey from Alberta to the seacoast that takes practically the cream off the business of cattle raising on the western plains; and if we had a railroad to Hudson Bay it would give us the advantage of a shorter railway journey by 1,000 miles. For that reason alone the people of Southern Alberta are specially interested in the building of that railroad."

The point raised by Mr. Herron has been emphasized time and again by prominent cattle dealers, and applies to all the western provinces. The Vancouver-Panama route, whatever may be its advantages in other respects, is considered impossible for the shipment of cattle to the Old Country. The St. Lawrence route, owing to long rail haul, involves serious depreciation in cattle shipments. But the best authorities contend that on the Hudson Bay route, owing to comparatively short rail haul and cool ocean voyage, cattle will arrive at their destination in better condition than when they began the journey. The benefit of the northern route in this respect can hardly be over-estimated, especially now that the British embargo has been removed.

The possibilities of winter-feeding and finishing cattle generally are receiving marked attention. In the last report of the Canadian Bank of Commerce is the following: "To an onlooker it seems a matter worthy of much consideration why the west does not carry on winter feeding to the same extent as does Ontario." This, with the embargo off and the Hudson Bay route in operation, should put the cattle industry of the west on a firm, permanent and profitable basis.

Reasons which in 1910 were considered good and sufficient justification for beginning the H.B.R. have not been lessened in any way during subsequent years, but have been strengthened and accentuated during this period, and in addition other new and cogent reasons for the completion of the road have developed.

AGRICULTURAL AREAS

During a number of years past, particularly at the time the right-of-way was being located and subsequently when the railway was under construction, there was brought to light the existence of valuable resources in the territory through which the railway passes. It will come as a surprise to many that the region mentioned contains large tracts of agricultural land. Officials of the Dominion government who



Hayfield adjoining town of The Pas

have travelled the country have reported that there is an immense clay belt lying some distance north of The Pas which includes an area of ten thousand square miles. The railway passes through this for a distance of over a hundred miles. Other similar areas less in extent are to be found throughout this territory. It has been shown that cattle-raising can become a profitable industry in different sections of this northern country where hay and water are abundant and shelter easily obtainable. Also it is important to note that The Pas is at the apex of the fertile Carrot river triangle. Engineers are now working on a reclamation scheme for the benefit of the lower part of the valley, and there is under construction a branch of the Canadian National Railway running from Melfort northeasterly to connect eventually with the southern terminus of the Hudson Bay Railway at The Pas. It is anticipated that the land tributary to this railway will in time be fully settled and comprise a prosperous farming community.

WATER POWERS

The proximity of the Hudson Bay Railway to the water-powers of the Nelson has already been referred to. It is estimated that the Nelson river is capable of producing over three million horse-power. Water-powers on other rivers are numerous and important.

PULPWOOD

Fires during the last quarter of a century have done great damage to the forest growth, but there are still extensive areas of pulpwood available. This, in conjunction with ample water-power facilities, makes possible the establishment of important industries.

FISHERIES

The cold waters of the numerous lakes of the north produce an abundance of fish of unexcelled quality, particularly lake trout, white fish and pickerel, and the sturgeon fisheries of the Churchill and Nelson rivers are probably the most important of the class on the continent.

MINERALS

The mining industry however will in all probability bring about the most important development in the north. The area in which discoveries have already been made, known as The Pas mineral belt, extends from a short distance west of the Hudson Bay Railway into the Province of Saskatchewan, in all about 150 miles, and is approximately 25 to 30 miles in width. At the eastern end, at Wekusko (Herb)



Sturgeon Fishing on Churchill River

Lake, tributary to the railway, some important gold discoveries have been made, and one camp is now in active operation. It is toward the western part of the belt that the now well-known Mandy and Flin Flon properties are located. From the former about two and a half million dollars' worth of copper was taken out during the early years of the war, and in the latter, after several years of diamond drilling at an expense of about three-quarters of a million dollars, sixteen to eighteen million tons of sulphide ore has been proved up. This contains copper, gold, silver and zinc with a normal value of seven to eight dollars per ton. This area is part of the great Laurentian Shield, and is of the same formation as the Cobalt region of Northern Ontario. The mineral discoveries already made in Northern Manitoba are simply an indication of the possibilities of the future.

HUDSON BAY

And what about the bay itself? Those who can speak with authority now call it a "national asset." No thorough and complete investigation of the fishing possibilities has yet been made, although there are certain governmental reports in connection therewith. From these and information obtained from other sources there is reason to believe that this extensive body of water and the rivers emptying therein can be relied upon for an abundant supply of such valuable fish as cod, herring, halibut, salmon, etc., for which an excellent market could be found on the prairies if the railway to the bay were in operation.

The hunting possibilities, especially in the northern part of the bay, are an important consideration. There the walrus, seal and the great Greenland whale abound. Immense herds of caribou roam

throughout the territory to the west and musk oxen may yet be found in considerable numbers. A reindeer industry has recently been established in Baffin Land, and there is no reason why this and others of a like nature should not be as commercially successful as the industry carried on in Alaska for a number of years.

Extensive iron deposits are known to exist in the Belcher Islands. It is reported that there is galena in workable quantities. Gold, silver and molybdenum have been found and it is well known that there is a copper-bearing area between the bay and the Arctic coast.

THE FUR TRADE

And first, last and all the time there is the fur trade. The pursuit of the little beaver brought the first trading ships into the bay and the territory tributary thereto under the British crown. Since the grant of a royal charter to the Hudson's Bay Company two hundred and fifty years ago this territory has been recognized as one of the greatest fur-producing areas of the world. The advent of the railway will not lessen the value of this trade; it is quite possible that the effect will be in the way of an increase. The country is so vast that extended portions thereof have not yet been explored. The railway will enable the hunter and trapper to penetrate further inland and yet give him better facilities to market his catch. There should also be taken into consideration the possibilities of fox-farming and rat ranching. The establishment of industries of this nature is now being considered.

MAY RIVAL THE T. & N.O.

What the future may reveal in respect to the resources of Hudson Bay and district cannot of course now be told, but undoubtedly the opening of this territory and connection with northern regions is an important reason for the completion of the railway. It may be that the experience of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway will be repeated. This line was projected for a special purpose—to open up an agricultural area—but was the means of bringing to light one of the richest mineral districts in the world.

Reference to the T. & N.O. Railway brings to mind another of the peculiar inconsistencies of certain opponents of the H.B.R. in the east. Last year a contract was let for the construction of seventy miles or so of this railway north of Cochrane, and the Ontario government has announced its intention of extending this line to James Bay as soon as possible in order to take advantage to the fullest extent of that outlet and of the extensive trade which it is expected will develop thereby. It would appear, therefore, at this distance that there are those who are boosting the Ontario project, at the same time opposing the construction of the railway in the west on which so much money has already been spent and which is so near completion.

And, besides, at the time of the extension of the boundaries of Ontario and Manitoba in 1921, the former province stipulated for and secured a strip of territory five miles wide through the area granted to the latter. Ontario's representatives declared that this strip was of vital importance to that province in order that it might have direct communication with the bay at Port Nelson, at which point it was arranged the strip should terminate. This is another instance of where

actions speak louder than words, and it is said that this desire of Ontario was not unremotely connected with the selection of the port mentioned as the H.B.R. terminal.

GENERAL SUPPORT OF SCHEME

In view of the history of the H.B.R., the condition in which it now stands is inexplicable. No public enterprise in Canada has received more general endorsement and support from national governments, parties and leaders. Prominent statesmen in the Dominion arena—opponents in almost every respect—have united in advocating the carrying out of this project, and there would certainly appear to be no change in the situation in this regard in recent years, although there have been several changes in government. Here are statements from the prime minister, former prime minister and leader until recently of the Progressive Party, as set out by them in letters to the secretary of The Pas Board of Trade.

Rt. Hon. Mackenzie King, December, 1920:

"With respect to the particular project of the Hudson Bay Railway, such expression as there has been on behalf of the party was given in parliament at the time the project was inaugurated."

Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen, November, 1921:

"I have several times stated the policy of the government towards the Hudson Bay Railway. I regard its completion as essential, and not only that but am most anxious that the least possible delay be allowed before its completion is finally undertaken."

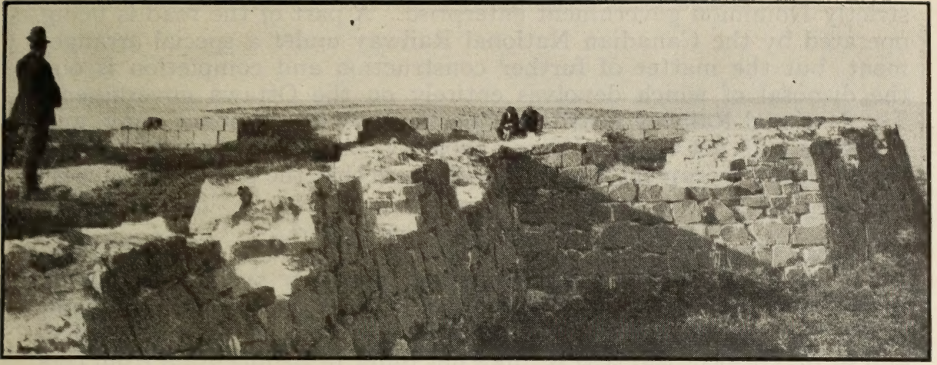


Whitemud Falls on Nelson River

Hon. T. A. Crerar, December, 1920:

"Expressing my own personal view, I have no hesitation in stating that this road should be completed to the bay at the earliest possible moment, and I hold the further belief that eventually it will become one of the great trade routes of the world."

Hon. Mr. Mackenzie King was a member of the government which began the construction of the road, and his letter would indicate that he and his party have not altered their attitude in this respect in any way. Mr. Robert Forke, M.P., who succeeded Mr. Crerar, has already come out strongly in favor of completion of the road.



Fort Prince of Wales at Churchill

IS IT A POLITICAL SCHEME?

It seems quite popular in certain quarters to refer to this enterprise as a political scheme; that the political parties have been "flirting with it in response to western sentiment;" that it "was inaugurated and continued to serve the political needs of both parties," etc., etc. In a word, the charge is that the political parties, and inferentially their leaders, have not been nor are they now acting sincerely in the matter, that all have conspired to flimflam the public. What is the significance of statements made in this regard? These are the alternatives presented. Either the prime ministers of Canada and other political leaders from Sir John A. Macdonald to Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King (men in whom the people of Canada have reposed their confidence and to whom have been accorded the highest honors in the gift of the people) having unequivocally and unconditionally promised that they would put through and complete a certain national undertaking, have made this promise without having properly investigated the circumstances or conditions in connection with the enterprise in question, in short, without knowing anything about the nature or significance of the pledge which they gave so freely; or on the other hand knowing that this promise or pledge could not be fulfilled or if fulfilled would not be in the interest either of the west or Canada as a whole, deliberately gave such pledge in order to obtain some seeming political advantage which at best could only be temporary! Are the people of Canada to understand that Macdonald, Tupper, Laurier, Borden, Meighen, King and many other leaders are guilty on either count? The alternatives need only to be squarely and plainly presented to show the evident absurdity of the charge. An affirmative answer to the above question would mean the destruction of any confidence which this country has in its system of government or the integrity of its leaders.

But, looking again at the history of the undertaking, what is the inescapable conclusion if the road is not completed, if it continues to be left in its abandoned condition?

NOT PART OF C.N.R.

The Hudson Bay Railway, contrary to an impression that seems to be more or less prevalent, is not part of the Canadian National system. It is still "under construction," and therefore is as yet a

strictly Dominion government enterprise. A part of the road is being operated by the Canadian National Railway under a special arrangement, but the matter of further construction and completion is one the disposal of which devolves entirely on the Ottawa government. The National Railway board, and particularly its president, may, and probably will, act in an advisory capacity, but the responsibility still rests on the government, and it is with them that the people of the west have to deal.

SUCCESSFUL UNDERTAKING

The success of any great enterprise, public or private, cannot be determined beforehand in every detail with mathematical precision. There is some element of chance in all undertakings of any importance, and in this respect the H.B.R. does not differ in its inception from certain other great projects that have proven eminently successful. But on the other hand it has probably more to recommend it and has less of the element of the unknown or undetermined than some of these other projects. Mr. E. W. Beatty, K.C., president of the C.P.R., in his New Year's address says: "The Canadian Pacific was built in the face of almost unsurmountable financial and physical difficulties and without any assured prospect of achieving success." Everyone is familiar with the criticisms of that great railway enterprise when the scheme was first under consideration. It was said by those even in high places that "it would not pay for axle grease for the wheels," and that "it would soon become simply twin streaks of rust." A quotation from the *Vancouver World*, which by the way is a strong advocate of the completion of the H.B.R., is of interest at this point:

"Many people still living have not forgotten that a learned engineer published a book to try and save Canada from the 'folly' of building the Canadian Pacific Railway. It makes comforting reading nowadays that 'there is only one strip of land 46 miles wide suitable for agriculture west of the great lakes, and everything north of this line is locked in a land of perpetual ice'."

As intimated in the foregoing, even the western plains were condemned utterly as a place of settlement by those of little faith and less vision. It is not merely a coincidence that this defamatory outpouring emanated from the same locality from which denunciation of the H.B.R. is most pronounced and virulent. The *Montreal Transcript* in 1856 made this very candid reference to what was then known as the west:

"The Red river is an oasis in the midst of a desert, a vast treeless prairie on which scarcely a shrub is to be seen. The climate is unfavorable to the growth of grain; the summer though warm enough is too short in duration, so that even the few fertile spots could with difficulty mature a potato or a cabbage."

History is again repeating itself. The H.B.R. is now subject to the same animadversion that was urged against the C.P.R. nearly half a century ago and against the fertile plains of the west a few years earlier. Who shall say that the results achieved by what are now the world's greatest transportation system and Britain's greatest wheat producing area shall not have their counterpart in the future in the success of the Hudson Bay Railway?

